

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing iron oxide-containing pellets comprising agglomerating fine ore particles in the presence of a binder system to form green pellets, and heating said green pellets in stages, said stages comprising a preheat stage having a temperature in the range of 900°C to 1200°C and a final stage having a temperature in the range of about 1,275-1,350°C, wherein said binder system is substantially free of hydrophobic liquid and comprises
  - (i) an inorganic binder and/or an organic binder, and
  - (ii) a binder additive selected from boron oxide, calcium borate, sodium borate, boron nitride, and mixtures thereof,wherein the amount of binder employed is from .0025 to 0.5 wt%, when an organic binder is used, and from 0.1 to 3% by weight, when an inorganic binder is used, based on the weight of the particulate material, and the amount of binder additive is from 0.01 to 1.0 wt% based on the weight of the particulate material.
2. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein the binder additive is selected from sodium tetraborate, calcium tetraborate, and mixtures thereof.
3. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder additive is sodium borate.
4. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is an organic binder.
5. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said binder system comprises cellulose ether and a binder additive selected from boron oxide, calcium borate, sodium borate, boron nitride, and mixtures thereof.

6. (original) The process according to claim 5 wherein the cellulose ether is carboxymethyl cellulose or a salt thereof.
7. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 6 wherein said sodium borate is sodium tetraborate.
8. (Withdrawn) The process of claim 1 wherein the boron-containing compound is calcium borate.
9. (Withdrawn) The process of claim 8 wherein said calcium borate is calcium tetraborate.
10. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein said binder additive is derived from ulexite, colemanite, Gerstley, Laguna Murray's, Gillespie, or mixtures thereof.
11. (Currently Amended) A process for producing iron oxide-containing pellets comprising agglomerating fine ore particles in the presence of a binder system to form green pellets, and heating said green pellets in stages, said stages comprising a preheat stage having a temperature in the range of 900°C to 1200°C to and a final stage having a temperature in the range of about 1,275-1,350°C, wherein said binder system is substantially free of hydrophobic liquid and comprises
  - (iii)(i) carboxymethyl cellulose or a salt thereof, and
  - (iv)(ii) a binder additive selected sodium tetraborate, calcium tetraborate and mixtures thereof .